composed of gardens, pastures, rope and waste grounds, the houses being of the most wretched description, the major part being in the last stage of repair or of habitation. This company, having a subscribed capital of 1,200,000*l.*, struggled slowly into existence against the united opposition of those whose interests were at stake. Objections were urged that ships would be removed to an inconvenient distance from the city, that the risk of fire was very great, that it was impossible to complete the plan, and that, even if completed, they could not possibly extend them. Time has shewn the folly of these arguments, but they had their weight in that day, and between seven and eight years were consumed in discussing the policy of it. Its success encouraged other speculations of the like nature, and the West, and eventually the East, India Docks were formed, the beneficial results of which were not only felt by the commercial world, but also by the community at large.

At this early period, however, architecture had been gradually improving for the previous sixty years; the heavy fabrics of brickwork, the uniform square mass of building, before so fashionable, and which had succeeded the uncouth structures that braved both time and proportion since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, then gave way to lighter Italian models. The introduction of Portland stone contributed much towards improving the beauty of English architecture, while the balcony, the Venetian gallery, by admitting a large body of air into apartments, greatly contributed to the health of the resident inhabitants; but the improved style of buildings manifest in the suburbs, formed a still more remarkable contrast with the ancient buildings of the old city; many of the houses even of the principal thoroughfares were still little better than lath and-plaster edifices; the shop fronts were mean and contemptible compared to the present noble display; the streets, better paved and lighted than any metropolis in Europe, were scarcely passable for mud; and the dim obscure and effluvia of train-oil were any thing but agreeable to the quiet order of night pedestrians, or to those miserable apologies for watchmen, yclept Charleys: robbery and violence were very frequent at night.

The extension of London was a natural and inevitable consequence of increase of population, wealth, and industry; but our acquired taste in building is attributable to several co-operating causes. The frequent and destructive spread of fires, and the stern necessity of attending to the health and comfort of a rapidly increasing population gave birth to the Building Act and its imperfect clauses. But the progress of improvement was almost imperceptible for the first ten years of this present century. Many elegant buildings, it is true, had been erected, many new and beautiful streets had been formed, but so little real progress was made, that the picture of London in 1800 is the picture of London in 1810. Fires, however much to be deplored, have had their full share in effecting local improvements, and to their destructive powers we owe many of our most beautiful public and private buildings. The theatres have arisen phœnix-like from their ashes, and the new Houses of Parliament, springing forth in like manner, will redound to the lasting fame of Mr. Barry, the architect. I remember the great fire at Wapping; what an awful, yet beautiful sight! the whole of a densely-populated neighbourhood in flames, and sheets of liquid fire floating down the river Thames; that fire was truly a blessing, it devoured dens of infamy, and swept away in a breath a huge cancer from the body corporate; it was the last essential purifying by burning which this great city was to undergo. I had been present at the burning, and three days after strolled over the still smoking ruins, and while I truly felt for the many friendless and houseless sufferers, I still thought of the noble purposes to which such a vast space could then be applied. A rather curious incident to which I was a witness may not be amiss here: while standing gazing upon the ruins before me, my attention was suddenly attracted to a true Boniface, such as only exists in the person of a Wapping landlord; his rubicund countenance exhibited a most extraordinary state of inquietude and restless anxiety; he was the landlord of a *Blue Anchor*, and upon that anchor his present hopes appeared fixed, for he shuffled onwards through the crowd as a being wholly unconscious of its presence; he neared the spot—the house to which he directed his attention was down—but the chimney was still standing—there was magic in that sight, his countenance suddenly underwent all the varied phases of hope, fear, joy, sorrow, and doubting anxiety; he advanced with accelerated step, thrust his hand up the chimney, and from it drew forth, with a yell of success, a large bag of gold—it was his all; the fire had not penetrated his secret recess—lucky dog!

At the west end of the town, never was improvement more called for than in 1813; the court, fixed and immovable, made property too valuable to be lightly abandoned, and nobility could not retreat far from its immediate atmosphere. The Prince Regent was the first to set the example of improvement, and, however little we admire his taste or choice of architects, still to him we are really and truly indebted for every improvement that followed. His will was good to realize the proud boast of Augustus, that "he found Rome of brick and left it of marble;" but reforms in building, as in every thing else, are difficult to accomplish when opposed to custom, early association, and individual interests; his views were therefore not met with that cordial acquiescence they ought to have been, but they produced all the effect truly required,—individual or corporate rivalry, and the onward march of taste. That beautiful park named in honour of him is much more honourable to this pacific and voluptuous monarch than the very equivocal tribute to the Duke of York erected on the site of Carlton House.

The improvements of the western end of the town were begun by removing Swallow-street and its neighbourhood, to make way for the present elegant street; and house after house rapidly disappeared as disposed of by auction, presenting a scene of demolition to which we were then wholly unaccustomed; and, armed with the Act of Parliament, the commissioners paid little or no attention to interests opposed to their plans, on the plea of inalienable rights, family inheritance, or dogged attachment to place—turn out you must. There is something strangely repulsive in these Acts of Parliament, by which the ancestral home is razed to the ground, the park, or family estate, is divided, and the solitude of privacy broken into and destroyed. Gold does much in the present day; but gold will not always compensate for the loss of that which we have loved for its own sake, or for associations connected with it. In the present instance, numerous complaints were made against these arbitrary ejectments, but the plea of public utility is imperative and knows no compromise, beyond that of a mercantile one. Of the many houses removed, my guardian purchased the material of several, among which was an old-fashioned mansion, in a state of great dilapidation, the effects of sheer old age. It was occupied by an elderly person, most decidedly very poor, but his careful attention to the minutiæ of dress, his amply-powdered wig, gold-headed cane, and silver buckles, together with his suavity of manners, proclaimed him a finished courtly gentleman of the old school. Docile as a child in all things else, he manifested a determined resistance to the sale of his property, refused his consent to any pecuniary reward, and expressed his determination to be put out only by force; his opposition was useless, the house must come down, even to prevent its falling, and our people were set to work. Seeing all further opposition useless, he begged of me, as a favour, that I would permit him to follow the steps of the workmen in their work of demolition, and to this I most cheerfully assented, for his deep and settled grief appealed most forcibly to the heart. In the midst of falling crashing timbers, and clouds of dust, might be seen this venerable old man, watching through the dim obscure the removal of every plank and joint, the displacement of every brick, the ripping out of every skirting-board; from room to room he went, from floor to floor he descended with the men, his evident anxiety increasing almost to agony as they neared the base of the building. He seldom spoke, and seemed almost unconscious of the presence of any one; a tear might now and then be found trickling down his aged cheek, and involuntary exclamations would escape him, evidently in unison with his thoughts: "No, no! Not here—not here!"

The whole of the upper portion of the house was removed, and the uncovered kitchens alone remained—his anxiety increased, tears of bitterness coursed his venerable cheeks, and wringing his hands in an agony of grief he exclaimed, "My noble boy, thy last hope perishes—but no—while a brick remains there is hope." Five days had elapsed and brick after brick was removed towards the foundation, and still he looked intent upon their labours; the workmen had retired—yet still he remained as though rooted to the ground on which he stood. I was a youth at that time, but my heart was sensitively open to the sorrows of others, and I would have given the world to have seen that old man smile again. With timidity I approached and seized his hand. I would have spoken words of comfort, but tears choked my utterance: he started—awakened to consciousness by my overpowering feelings—he gazed upon me in silence for a few moments, and then mingled his tears with mine. As soon as his feelings subsided, he convulsively whispered, "There are papers, my child—papers of importance to me and mine—concealed in this house—I cannot yield up my hope so long as a brick remains." I assisted his search, raised up one by one the flags, sounded every part of the remaining walls, but all to no purpose. Night advanced, we were retiring, when a thought struck me to examine the extensive range of vaults—he had often done so, he said, but perhaps my young eyes might assist him in a stricter examination. I procured flambeaux and carefully scrutinized every part of them. Upon entering one of a range of four, I observed it was much shorter than the rest, although in every other respect uniform, and on applying a strong light to the extreme end, discovered a patchwork of brick, evidently more recent than the rest, and not occasioned by dilapidation; I pointed it out to him—we assailed it with hammers—the brickwork immediately fell inwards, discovering an aperture beyond it; through this I crept, and my companion followed—it was a continuation of the vaults, but almost filled with a variety of boxes and packages—a gleam of hope, followed by a wild cry of joy, betrayed his feelings—box after box was rapidly forced open, until at length he suddenly started backward, and fell without a word at my feet, his hands firmly grasping a bundle of parchments.

All that remains is told in a few words. His elder brother, with himself, joined the Pretender, were declared rebels, and his family estates confiscated. Being mortally wounded in the field of battle, George sent for his brother, who was in the immediate neighbourhood, and after giving some general directions, was about to inform him where his papers were concealed. "You will find them," he said, "in my house, in town in the ——." Death stopped his further utterance. The survivor, then a young married man, fled the country, and returning after some years' banishment, he found the family town-house untenanted, took possession, and commenced an unavailing search for the papers. Age crept upon him—poverty oppressed him—but still he wandered through the house like some discontented spirit, in the vain hope of finding the hidden treasure. His wife died—all his children died but one, a fine young man, who, unable to purchase a commission, had volunteered previous to the close of the war, and attained the rank of a lieutenancy: he was put on half-pay at the close of the war. In this young man rested all his hopes—the discovery of those papers gave him rank and wealth.

THE COLCHESTER CORN EXCHANGE.—The front elevation of the New Corn Exchange, which is now in course of erection by Mr. Hayward, consists of a receding centre and wings; the entrances, three in number, are in the centre compartment under an Ionic colonade, which is surmounted by an allegorical group of sculpture, representing Ceres scattering around her the produce of an abundant harvest. The wings are formed by pilasters of the Ionic order, between which, in each wing, is a recessed panel, containing a bas-relief composed of agrarian produce and implements of husbandry. The whole of the High-street front is to be of stone of the same description as that of the Town Hall, with the exception of the plinth and steps, which are to be of granite.

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